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ABSTRACT

The debate between objective and new journalism centers upon the question of which approach factually depicts reality. Both genres, however, are part of one fact/fiction matrix in which all narrative forms since John Locke have been based upon factuality. The difference between the genres is that new journalism relies upon the sensory data of individuals and their own experience to form a unified picture of reality. Objective journalism relies on the procedural data provided by participants in bureaucratic processes for facts about the passage of an event through administrative categories. A comparison of fact in two narratives about El Salvador during June 1982 shows that Joan Didion's new journalism report from an individual locus of consciousness is shaped by the needs of a biological organism, while the objective journalism report of the "New York Times" reveals an accommodation of individual reporter Raymond Bonner with the public locus of the national newspaper of record and its political, economic, and military interests. (Author/CRH)

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Qualitative Studies Division

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# THE `FACTS' OF EL SALVADOR ACCORDING TO OBJECTIVE AND NEW JOURNALISM

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## Introduction

Since the 1960s, each side in the debate over new journalism has accused the other of projecting a fictional view of reality. Writers within the tradition described as objective journalism attack practitioners of new journalism for distorting the facts by refusing to adhere to the methods of objectivity, while the latter assert that journalists who call themselves objective are guilty of factual distortion because of biases embedded in the very methods they use. When the argument is removed from the heat of the fray, however, it is clear that both types of narrative fall within the single fact/fiction matrix that has dominated English-language discourse for the past four hundred years; where they have come to differ is in the methods used to discern what is fact, and in the claimed relationship of fact to reality.

These differences are here explored by distinguishing between the two types of narrative form according to the nature of the Lockean loci of consciousness from which they are written, for each type of locus of consciousness determines and uses fact as a boundary-defining technique in different and characteristic ways. This theoretical framework is then used in a comparative analysis of two texts that report on the same subject, El Salvador in June of 1983: the objective journalism of The New York Times and the new journalism of Joan Didion.

This paper ties together a number of disparate strands from the work of other researchers into a coherent theory that provides a new approach to the analysis of texts as well as to the examination of the development of narrative forms within journalism.

## Lockean Loci of Consciousness and Journalism

Locke's influence upon narrative form began with publication of his Essay Concerning Human Understanding in 1690 and grew in strength during the following centuries. His powerful theories described the relationship between text and the reality to which it refers in terms of factuality, a concept that has been the basis of Western written narrative ever since [1].

Locke's philosophy is rooted in a concept of consciousness that is not tied to the boundaries of the human organic unit, but results from the maintenance of a way of perceiving and interacting with the world across time [2]. A locus of consciousness may reside in a single human being, a group of human beings, or it may exist without any physical manifestation at all. Biologically dispersed but perceptually unified corporations or administrative bodies are examples of what are here termed "public" loci of consciousness, while loci embodied in single human beings are termed "individual."

According to Locke, the locus of consciousness is an observer that receives the sensory information of experience in the form of simple ideas. Through reflection, consciousness compares ideas, compounds simple ideas into complex, and moves from complex ideas to abstraction.

Facts are statements of simple ideas expressed in language. Once expressed, facts become aural, visual, or physical elements in a world shared with other loci of consciousness. Locke does not claim that facts are concrete, provable, and indisputable; rather, they are the linguistic products of the interaction of organic loci of consciousness with their environments--loci that are concerned about their own continued survival,

well-being, and growth. Thus, fact is in essence a technique [3] used by loci of consciousness for boundary definition. Disputes arise when loci of consciousness that interact disagree about the existence or nature of facts along shared boundaries; consensual realities are formed when such loci negotiate a definition of those facts that are tenable to all participating loci of consciousness.

Different types of loci of consciousness have come to manifest themselves in characteristic narrative forms; the interrelationships between genres reveal the relative political power of the reporting loci. Lennard Davis has argued that the lines distinguishing "fact" from "fiction" shift in response to legal pressures such as fear of libel suits and treason charges. These legal tools came to have political utility during the 17th century, when "fact" came to be identified with correctness of ideological position, while "false" denoted an unacceptable stance. Libel law thus has exploited the ambiguity inherent in text and, with the market, regulates the nature of text [4].

Over time, these forces first differentiated newspapers and novels out of the fact/fiction matrix, and then further distinguished among types of newspapers, separating earlier story-model newspapers and contemporary new journalism from the information-model newspapers of objective journalism [5]. Objective journalism derives from a <u>public</u> locus of consciousness that is centered in an organizational identity spread across space, through time, and beyond the individuals of which the organization is comprised; it expresses the dominant political perspective as reified in the bureaucratic mechanisms that regulate society [6]. New journalism, on the other hand, is the narrative manifestation of <u>individual</u> loci of consciousness,

coterminous with the biological organism of each distinct writer and thus potentially independent of administrative, organizational, or party perspectives [7].

Both types of journalism use fact as a technique to define the boundaries of the locus of consciousness from which each reports. For each, the facts that are deemed critical are those held essential to its own interests; information from the multitudinous data of daily experience that is not deemed pertinent to the survival and well-being of the reporting locus of consciousness is ignored or rejected. But the ways in which the two forms of journalism wield fact are quite disparate.

The methods of objective journalism have been well-explored [8]. New journalism, however, has not yet received similar analysis of the methods of the genre. Explanations of new journalism have fallen into four camps:

(1) New journalism is the appropriate genre to describe a reality that won't hold its shape. The concept that reality itself has become discontinuous, fragmented, chaotic, and fiction-like was particularly popular during the 1960s, but has continued to have proponents [9].

(2) The rise of new journalism is due to class-based motives. Class arguments for the appearance of this new literary form range from Marxist [10], to simpler status-oriented approaches [11], to disputes among literary classes [12], to economic struggles among writers [13]. Kaul describes the formation of journalists into a new class that plays the charismatical religious role in American society; in such a scheme, new journalism is confessional literature [14].

(3) New journalism is a response to new mass communication technologies. Proponents of this view include those who see a battle

between the printed word and film and video media [15], as well as those who see journalism itself as part of the technological crisis [16].

(4) New journalism is just a way of grouping together a lot of good writers who happened to come along at the same time [17].

Each of these explanations places new journalism in the limited time frame of the second half of the 20th century. Returning the narrative form to its larger context, however, allows a comparison between it and objective journalism that contrasts the ways in which individual and public loci of consciousness use fact as a technique. The following descriptive dimensions evolved from the body of work on objective journalism to apply to a range of narrative forms [18].

Procedures are methods for defining public occurrences that transform "mere happenings into publicly discussable events" [19]. Happenings become events when they are useful to a locus of consciousness in ordering its experience; once communicated, such facts become objects (aural, visual, or tactile) in the environment of other loci of consciousness. Procedures both define the cyclical routines through which facts are gathered and identified, and reveal the categories through which the reporting locus of consciousness perceives the world.

Selection of sources of information deemed worthy of attention determines which of the myriad details of daily sensory input are to be considered facts. A locus of consciousness will attend to those sources of information that are determinative of the conditions of that locus's environment. Dependence upon different sources of information will yield disparate versions of fact from the same spatial and temporal environment.

Space bounds the environmental dimensions of what is interpreted by

a locus of consciousness as fact, determining the shape and size of the material reference. Spatial boundaries mark the limits of the consequences of any action, and may range from the limited region of direct physical contact with an actor to global effects. Generalized facts assume that this place is like that place, this situation like that situation, and thus are metaphoric in nature.

Time also bounds the nature of individual facts, denoting their effective limits in the temporal dimension. A fact may be in the past, and therefore history (a fait accompli), or in the present, and therefore news (and capable of responding to further action).

Context determines the environment in which facts are determined to be existing, or true. It is the context of individual facts that connects them to other facts in creation of the wholistic view that identifies any locus of consciousness. In order for the facts of any locus of consciousness to be effective in shaping its boundaries and therefore the environment, other loci of consciousness must be convinced that their context is shared and thus communicated facts worthy of attention.

## The Use of Fact by Public Loci of Consciousness

The 20th century public locus of consciousness adheres to a belief in the validity of the notion of objectivity. It insists that the facts which it reports are really out there, and that it has nothing to do with their formation. Schudson describes this as a sense of ethical responsibility, defining objectivity as "the belief that one can and should separate facts from values" [20]; he means by "values" preferences for how the world should be. Flippen elaborates upon this role conception, calling the newsman a "neutral observer," whose "impact on the outcomes of political

controversy, it assumes, is nonexistent" [21].

Facts for public loci of consciousness are determined by regular procedures that depend upon organizational descriptions of reality--a fact is so because someone (bureaucratically reliable) has said it is so. Almost all the facts of objective journalism come from the experience of reporters with the operations of bureaucracies; facts are the information products of those bureaucracies [22].

These facts are well defined, categorized, and, as a consequence, easily processable for a public locus of consciousness. They are considered valid by virtue of their basis in decisions about the world formed by socially-accepted policy-makers and the reification of those attitudes in administrative procedures. Thus news stories idealize bureaucratic processes and categories, rendering invisible matters which might challenge those idealizations. Over time, objective news stories and bureaucracies mutually validate each other [23].

Through such methods a public locus of consciousness uses fact as a technique to define its boundaries by communicating a picture of a world in which its own narrative expression plays the key role of announcing to readers the passage of events through established bureaucratic mechanisms. These procedures are at the same time protective--Tuchman notes that newspapers "invoke" objectivity the way peasants use garlic to ward off evil spirits [24]--and nutritive. The procedures of objectivity are believed to steer a newspaper clear of libel while meeting its metabolic needs for consumption and digestion of set quantities of material regularly, continuously, and in a timely manner.

The sources of information for a public locus of consciousness are

as a consequence almost exclusively bureaucratic. These sources are assumed to be reliable because of the legitimacy of the institutions involved, the assumption that those institutions have their own internal means of verifying facts, and the ongoing relationships between reporters and institutional sources. The result is a moral division of labor: reporters aren't allowed to know what their sources will not or do not tell them. Bureaucratic sources of information have designed the needs of this system into the policy planning and implementation process to shape both personal and organizational careers through a constant flow of news that directs the attention of reporters [25].

The space boundaries of facts as used by public loci of consciousness are delineated by the rounds of the bureaucratic beat and the geographic limits thus defined--what is commonly described as the beat system [26]. These news sources tend to view capital cities as the center of the universe from which all action flows, and assume that bureaucratic mechanisms are the only possible sources of effective action. As the bureaucratic network is geographically dispersed, particular physical environments are not of high interest.

The time boundaries of fact as determined by the public locus of consciousness are also bureaucratically derived. Phase structures are bureaucratically perceived and socially sanctioned sequential schemes of interpretation. Each phase designates a stage of an event with a typical time duration. There is continuity between phases, and movement of an event from one to another is a news peg. Thus events are predictable and yield a limited, predetermined set of outcomes [27].

Reports from a public locus of consciousness claim to be

context-free. There is, however, an implicit context derived from dependence upon bureaucratic reification of prevailing political, economic, and social thought based on a particular view of history and expectation of the future. Denial of the existence of this context makes it more difficult for the lay reader to perceive and understand the context through which the news should be interpreted.

The Use of Fact by Individual Loci of Consciousness

Like public loci of consciousness of this era, individual loci of consciousness insist that the facts they report are true; and as for the former, this claim by the latter is motivated by a sense of ethical responsibility. But for individual locus of consciousness, that responsibility is defined as explicit recognition of the reporter's role in the shaping of reported facts, both as an actor in the reality being described, and as a creative selector and framer of the data being communicated.

The procedures used by new journalists are idiosyncratic in detail from person to person. All, however, use the method described by Sontag: "To understand is to interpret. And to interpret is to restate the phenomenon, in effect to find an equivalent for it" [28].

The procedures of individual loci of consciousness record and interpret the daily sensory experience of the writer. Occurrences become newsworthy when they have created an impact upon the reporter in a constellating experience that brings random human experience into a recognizable factual pattern [29].

New journalists are concerned about the human need to make sense out of the din of data, lending a testimonial air to much of their work [30].

An individual locus of consciousness uses fact to describe a world to which as a writer he or she can testify—it is the world of his or her own experience. This use of fact establishes the boundaries of the reporting locus of consciousness by insisting upon coherence among the facts of experience and communicating that coherence. It is concerned about the survival of a single personality; and it is nutritive in that the very act of reporting seems to be in and of itself sustenance for the personality (in the words of Joan Didion, "We tell stories in order to live") [31].

Facts may come from any direction, any source of information, at any time, and whatever one is doing. They are considered valid because they come from the experience of the reporting locus of consciousness [32].

The individual locus of consciousness reports facts in the terms by which they come--scene. Thus the immediate environment defines space boundaries; but that environment includes the writer's memory, making those boundaries potentially infinite.

The boundaries of fact in time for new journalists have the same characteristics. While the present moment is of primary interest, the writer's memory and imagination are part of that present and thus time limits are also potentially infinite.

Everything is context for the individual locus of consciousness, for the purpose of such reporting is to construct a meaningful world in which the facts of experience have contextual significance. Context is so important in writing from individual loci of consciousness that it may be said to be the point altogether: the news lies not in the facts themselves, but in how the facts relate to each other. As Hellmann says, "Ultimately, the news is of the efficacy and necessity of patterning

itself" [33].

## Reporting by Public and Individual Loci of Consciousness about El Salvador

In the study that follows, the different uses of fact by public and individual loci of consciousness in reporting about the same events is examined in an attempt to compare and illuminate the reality depicted by the two modes of reporting. The appearance of new journalist Joan Didion's book Salvador [34], her report on a visit to El Salvador during June of 1982, offered an unusual opportunity for this type of comparison--rarely have new journalists chosen to write about the same events covered by objective journalism. Her text will be compared with reporting in The New York Times about El Salvador during the same period, chosen because of the consensual perception of that newspaper as an epitome of the genre of objective journalism. This study thus is broader than the Shipman [35] study of The New York Times coverage of El Salvador, which examined changes in content over time, as well as placing the newspaper within a theoretical framework that examines the uses of fact by loci of consciousness.

As El Salvador has come to play a dominant role in the news over the past couple of years, longstanding questions about the paucity and inappropriateness of coverage of the country by U.S. mass media have come again to the fore [36]. Now, however, El Salvador joins other developing nations in demands for a New World Information Order that accuse the Western mass media of distortions in reports about their societies [37].

While throughout history libel law has enabled individuals to challenge the facticity of narrative discourse of which they are the

subject, today entire societies and cultures similarly dispute the facticity of narrative discourse of which they are the subject, and seek legal redress. As part of that process, UNESCO's MacBride Commission listed several types of distortions of fact that are transmitted by news-gathering organizations, including silence on issues not considered important by the reporting agency, highlighting events that aren't considered important by the society being described, preconditioning of events by presenting facts in a certain way, and the combining of isolated facts into a misleading whole [38]. This list of characteristics could as well be used to describe the procedures of objective journalism detailed above, for it refers to dependence upon bureaucratic news sources, administrative news beats, and reliance upon conceptual categories established by administrative processes. That there is discomfort with the consequences of the application of these procedures in other cultures should not be surprising, for as Geyer has noted:

> most breaking news in Latin America is of little real significance. This is because in this area the forms--the elections, the drawing up of constitutions, family life, the words used in political doctrine--are highly observed and cherished but often do not mirror the substantive life of the society. [39]

The period under study was within nine months of the decision by the United States government to "draw the line against communism" in El Salvador, and followed 2-1/2 years of civil war in that country. The results of March, 1982 elections were still being widely disputed; there was international concern about abuses of human rights by governmental

forces and U.S. interest in unsolved murders of four North American religious workers; and recent land reforms seemed to be slowing despite continued widespread poverty and starvation.

The Facts about El Salvador as Reported by The New York Times

The unit of analysis for The New York Times was the individual article. During the period under study 33 pieces about El Salvador appeared in the paper. The writer stationed in El Salvador, Raymond Bonner, had only been a reporter for two years and was hired as a stringer for The New York Times just a few months earlier. His reports over the winter and spring of health and educational activities in guerrilla-held territory and detailing of massacres and torture sessions by Salvadoran government forces had stimulated public rebuke by officials of the U.S. government and a visit to El Salvador by the newspaper's managing editor to smooth the waters. Shortly after the period of this study, Bonner was removed from the Salvadoran beat and returned to New York [38].

During June, Bonner's byline was on 13 stories. There were nine news briefs datelined El Salvador, two news briefs from the State Department in Washington, DC., four other writers received a single by-line, and there were three editorial page pieces and two letters to the editor.

Procedure. According to the text, Bonner collected facts by attending public ceremonies and press conferences, reading newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio (or reading CIA-supplied transcripts of broadcasts, per a description of the process provided by Didion), and then making phone calls or seeking personal interviews with officials to get their responses to statements made by other officials through these public fora. His news beat occasionally reached to guerrilla activities once they

had become officially acknowledged, and to the Catholic Church. Non-official statements by participant observers, most often government employees, were solicited about 50% of the time. Bonner was stationed in the capital city of San Salvador, though he occasionally reported from the countryside.

Sources of information. The sources of information cited in The New York Times stories fall into three categories: the Salvadoran government, the U.S. government, and other (including guerrillas and representatives of the Catholic Church). Most stories cited more than one source, for a total of 105 cites. The breakdown is as follows (numbers within parentheses denote number of cites). Salvadoran government: military sources (13), provisional president Magana (5), past president Duarte (5), Central Election Board (4), agencies that administer AID funds (2), Roberto d'Aubuisson (1), other (2); sources linked to the Salvadoran government: two largest newspapers in El Salvador (3), political leaders (2); U.S. government: State Department (26), legislative branch (7), Reagan and his administration (4), other (5); rebels: Radio Venceremos (7), rebel leaders (1), individuals sympathetic to cause (2); Catholic Church: Central American University (6); other: attorney for murdered nuns (2), refugee organization officials and refugees (3), The New York Times (1), details from reporter's experience (2).

Space. In datelines, San Salvador was cited most often (20), with Washington, DC coming in next (8). Also cited were San Marcos Lempa (2), Los Angeles, Chicago, and Ossining, NY.

Within the text, San Salvador was also the most prominent (9). Six provinces were named overall, most just once or twice; the exception was

the guerrilla stronghold of Morazan (11). Fourteen individual towns were named besides San Salvador, with repetition only for a couple of towns within Morazan. El Playon, a body dump, is mentioned once, as is the Pan-American Highway and "a guerrilla camp."

In the United States, the military bases of Fort Bragg and Fort Benning, where Salvadoran soldiers are being trained, were mentioned relatively often (4). Cities cited included Washington, DC (4), New York (3), Hollywood, and a number of cities that house the Salvadoran immigrant population.

Few other countries receive cites: Honduras (4), Cuba (2), Nicaragua, Argentina, Mexico, South Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Spain.

Time. Every news article reported on events from "today" or "yesterday," but other key time frames were noted: the March 28 elections (11), the Carter Administration (8), the beginning of the war 2-1/2 years earlier (3), the 1972 elections, also charged as fraudulent (2). Several time periods were mentioned just once: Duarte's regime, January 1981 (when two American labor leaders were murdered in San Salvador), and 1932 (when a right-wing coup destroyed the land reforms of the era).

References to the future placed current events on a schedule leading to an inevitable conclusion: the war would be over in two years or the end of this year, that aid will come next year or next month, there will be elections in 1984, etc..

Context. Nineteen of the articles mentioned more than one significant event or issue as the context of the news story, for a total of 73 cites. The war was cited most often (17, 11 of which focused on the involvement of the U.S., 3 specifically discussing military tactics

suggested to the Salvadoran army by U.S. military advisers). Contexts of most of the rest of the stories were also war-related: land redistribution (over which the guerrillas claim they are fighting) (11, 9 mentioning American involvement); abrogation of human rights (defended as just during a war by the Salvadoran government) (11, 8 implying American involvement and 6 mentioning the murders of American citizens); the allegedly fraudulent recent election (the results of which are claimed by the Reagan administration as support for its military policies in El Salvador) (10, 7 charging American involvement with the fraud), military and economic aid to El Salvador from the United States (11). Also receiving cites were the state of the economy (5) and last, but not least interesting, newspaper reporting as effective events in the Salvadoran environment (8, 4 specifically discussing the reports of The New York Times itself).

Summary. Bonner's writing was produced by collecting and processing oral and written official statements from governmental bureaucracies on a beat with two centers--San Salvador, El Salvador, and Washington, DC. But these procedures of objective journalism were applied by a relatively inexperienced and demonstrably independent mind that had been rigorously trained both as an attorney (Bonner had worked for Ralph Nader) and in the Marine Corps (he had also served in Vietnam). Thus the newspaper's coverage of El Salvador during June of 1982 is not classical objective journalism. Instead, the work of an individual locus of consciousness, treading the line of acceptability, is mixed with the newspaper's accommodating responses.

As a result, the month's text read as a whole is disjointed. Two kinds of stories appeared: Ray Bonner reported on the violence, and the

next day there was an anonymous story repeating a State Department statement that the killing had declined. Bonner reported that the land redistribution program was stymied, and almost immediately there was an anonymous story quoting Ambassador Hinton's denial of significant changes in that program. Bonner reported that the United States was heavily involved militarily in El Salvador, both in providing training to Salvadoran troops and through the activities of military advisers stationed there, and those reports were followed up immediately by anonymous stories detailing guerrilla-inflicted casualties. Bonner reported on growing anti-Americanism in El Salvador, and it was followed by an anonymous story denying the illegality of any American actions in that country.

Bonner's twist in the procedures of objective journalism was to describe the stalls and dysfunctions in bureaucratic events as they progress through administrative processes: The governments staged an election and Bonner found evidence of electoral fraud. The governments put on ceremonies passing land titles to peasants, and Bonner discovered that the Land to the Tiller Law had been suspended and five times as many peasants were being evicted from their land as were receiving title. The governments claimed a return to normalcy, and Bonner reported details of body dumps, indicating the breakdown of a system of any kind.

The Facts of El Salvador as Reported by Joan Didion

The unit of analysis for Joan Didion's book Salvador was the scene. Determination of scene boundaries was subjective, for there are no clear delineations within the text--a scene is shorter than a chapter, but may be longer than a single group of paragraphs. Thirty-eight scenes were defined within Salvador.

Didion and her husband, new journalist John Gregory Dunne, were in El Salvador for two weeks in the middle of June. They stayed at the same hotel in which most reporters were billeted, and had access to the same sources. Didion had the advantage of hindsight in her writing, for she was able to collect information until shortly before much of the book was first published as a series of articles in The New York Review of Books in October of 1982.

Salvador was not Didion's first writing about Latin America. Her 1977 novel A Book of Common Prayer [40] is set in a fictional Central American country, and several of her essays reflect an influence by Latin American events, writers, and travels to the region [41].

Procedure. Didion's fact-gathering procedure was polymorphous. She attended to information from her own senses of sight, smell, hearing, and touch. Her written and oral sources were extremely diverse, reflecting a belief that everything written or said holds some value as information. She made a number of personal visits to sources, participated in both informal and formal social gatherings, and collected information during daily transactions, such as at the drugstore. She travelled outside of San Salvador as well as visiting a number of sites within the city. Her "beat" included official American and Salvadoran sites, quasi-official sites such as the morgue, and unofficial sites like a number of neighborhoods in San Salvador, hotels, shopping centers, and restaurants. She also visited churches, a priests' home, a craft festival in a small town, the closed National University, the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission, two body dumps, and went as close to the war front as she could get.

Didion also made a point of debunking the procedures of objective

journalists. She described the dependence of the U.S. Embassy upon Salvadoran newspapers for the weekly body count by which the State Department makes its policy decisions; the provision to reporters of daily typed CIA translations of broadcasts by the allegedly clandestine rebel radio station, Radio Venceremos, by the U.S. Embassy; the concoction of events by the Salvadoran Ministry of Defense for the benefit of reporters and their dutiful attendance; and interviews with government officials as performance.

Sources of information. The broad range of Didion's information sources divides into three categories--written, oral, and physical--which break down as follows. Written: communications from the U.S. government (14), official communications from the Salvadoran government (6), political pamphlets from both sides (3 apiece), North American newspapers and wire services (12, 7 from The New York Times), North American history books (3), North American periodicals, Latin American periodicals (8), Salvadoran and international human rights organizations (4), commercial texts (signs, bumper stickers, advertising, contracts) (7), religious texts (2) and a written phone message; oral: official U.S. sources (23), provisional president Magana (6), a Magana aide, several anonymous Salvadoran citizens once apiece (a woman who runs a slum grocery store, "a well-off Salvadoran," "a high-placed Salvadoran," a taxi driver, Salvadoran women at an embassy party, an artist, and a group of intellectuals), representatives of the Catholic Church (3), representatives of Protestant churches (3), commercial sources (4), environmental noises (4), other reporters (7), Radio Venceremos (2), television (3), and "someone else"; physical: landscape (14), cars (10), architecture (7), roadblocks (4), garbage (3),

household goods (2), art (2), and innumerable photographs and actual bodies and disappearances seen in the course of her daily business.

The oral and written information sources were analyzed together by Didion for commonly-used words ("reorganization" and "desaparecer"—"to disappear"), phrases ("let's play ball"), and sentences ("There is no one after us, no young ones").

Space. Sites within San Salvador were mentioned most often (28). Three towns outside of San Salvador are named, as are three provinces and two body dumps. Other Latin American countries cited included Panama (7), Honduras (5), Mexico (4), Cuba (2), Nicaragua, Chile, Belize, Paraguay, and Colombia.

Within the United States, Didion's home state of California was mentioned most often (3); Colorado, Georgia, and Alabama were cited once apiece. Several American cities were mentioned: San Francisco (4), Washington (3), Los Angeles (3), New York (3), Miami (2), and San Diego. Fort Benning is mentioned twice and Fort Bragg once. El Salvador and the United States are geographically linked by Didion's reference to the unsuccessful 1821 petition of El Salvador to join the union of the United States. Non-Latin American countries named were Spain (3), Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union. The continents of Africa, South America, and Europe (2) are also mentioned by Didion.

An entire section was devoted to a geological phenomenon, a June earthquake that measured .7 on the Richter scale in California, which was not even mentioned by The New York Times.

Time. Didion's interpretation of the present in El Salvador was rooted in her understanding of the country's past. Interwoven throughout

the text are historical passages on pre-colonial times, the colonial period, and 19th century events. Closer to the present, Didion goes into increasing detail; for example, she describes the mass executions of La Matanza (4) in 1932. By the 1970s, cites are more frequent and specific, and for the 1980s, month and date are mentioned along with year and several events per year are described. Among events of the previous decade, Didion included the closing of the university in 1972, the execution of a poet in 1975, threats against the Jesuits in 1977, an October 1979 coup, the 1980 murder of four North American religious workers, the 1981 murder of two North American labor leaders, the 1982 murder of four Dutch journalists, and so on.

Didion made little comment about the future in El Salvador, noting that thinking about the future is not in the nature of things there. She described a periodicity in news about Salvadoran events with six-month cycles tied to the human rights certification process that had been required for economic and military aid from the U.S., and commented that the American Embassy view of the Salvadoran future works with a five-year horizon.

Context. For Didion, all news in El Salvador is news of the context, "the situation." In her words: "El Salvador is one of those places in the world where there is just one subject, the situation, the problema, its various facets presented over and over again, as on a stereopticon" [42]. She cited the situation 12 times in the course of the book as the context in which to understand political events such as coups, legal issues such as the land reform, the ubiquitous violence, and contorted social forms. Even the war itself is understood to be just a

facet of the situation.

The paramount feature of the situation is disappearances. Didion mentioned murder 31 times specifically in her text, and makes innumerable links between this phenomenon and other aspects of Salvadoran culture. The inducement of terror is described five times. Also cited frequently (13) is the country's lack of a consensual reality and myriad of mutating appearances--what she calls la noche obscura, or "heart of darkness," quoting Conrad. All facts, numbers, names, and events in El Salvador seem to sink into la noche obscura, and it is within this context that events such as the question of the disputed election or of the amount of money which has left El Salvador must be understood. Within this situation, there are personalities and plots rather than issues (4), and acquiescence is the operating mode (2).

Summary. Didion's reportage was very much bound up with her own personality and experience. Collecting facts was a 24-hour job and occurred in any situation, whether explicitly reportorial or not. She methodically described relationships between people and their social, political, and economic manifestations in dimensions as diverse as the tourist industry, intermarriage within the Salvadoran oligarchy, and inter- and intra-governmental maneuvering. As a reporter she was firmly embedded within her physical environment.

Overall, events in El Salvador were not perceived as either successful or unsuccessful expressions of a procedural process, but as occurring in a vacuum of process altogether.

Comparison between the Two Texts

Though Joan Didion and Raymond Bonner reported from the same small

geographic entity, El Salvador, during the same limited time period, June of 1982, the realities to which their writings refer differ significantly. Bonner and The New York Times rely almost exclusively upon facts that list numbers--of dead, of disappeared, of land titles, of votes--and names--the Land for the Tillers program, the election, the president. Didion, on the other hand, specifically notes the uselessness of this kind of fact in El Salvador:

> All numbers in El Salvador tended to materialize and vanish and rematerialize in a different form, as if numbers denoted only the "use" of numbers, an intention, a wish, a recognition that someone, somewhere, for whatever reason, needed to hear the ineffable expressed as a number. [43]
>
> Not only numbers but names are understood locally to have only a situational meaning, and the change of a name is meant to be accepted as a change in the nature of the thing named. [44]

Procedurally, The New York Times generally followed the methods identified with the narrative form of a public locus of consciousness, objective journalism. Bonner's routine beat took him through governmental bureaucracies, collecting official statements for translation for the mass audience of the paper. Almost all information sources cited are formal bureaucratic sources in the capital city. In contrast, Didion embodied the methods of a reporter who writes from an individual locus of consciousness. Her procedure can be summarized as an attempt to put herself into as many different situations as possible; her information sources included facts as received by any of her senses from any direction. Though she did use official information sources, they were not considered the most

reliable--comments underbreath at the corner drugstore were considered as valuable as governmental pronouncements, if not more so.

The New York Times' identification of news pegs derives from the passage of bureaucratically-recognized events through administrative procedures. Thus the paper focused on such formal events as the March 28 elections and changes in land redistribution plans. Didion remarks, however, that phrases such as "land reform" and "the initialization of a democratic political process" are "so remote in situ as to render them hallucinatory" [45]; elsewhere she comments about the importance to everyone of maintaining such symbolic forms for the sake of the United States. For her, attention is focused on the non-existence of any solid reality and the ubiquitousness of death and terror. What The New York Times limned as the important events in El Salvador, Didion describes as illusory symbols.

The paper's time field is restricted to a very limited present, referring only rarely to a past that goes back only as far as 1932. Didion, on the other hand, placed present events within the context of a history that goes back to pre-colonial times. As a consequence, Didion perceives the country of El Salvador as a perpetual frontier between cultures, while the NYT sees another locale that can be understood by and controlled through normative bureaucratic procedures. And for Didion, both present and past were filled with significant events; the newspaper noted relatively few happenings, indicating a far more simplistic approach to the affairs of El Salvador.

All events noted by The New York Times related to the interests of the United States and were described through the lenses of those interests.

Didion's references to the United States were more personal, comparisons of her own known culture with that of a new environment. She placed El Salvador on an Ibero-American map that included Mexican and Panamanian power centers, Spanish influence, and a myriad of Latin American countries with which El Salvador interacts. Ibero-America is placed in a map that includes Scandinavia, Europe, and Asia as well as the United States and the Soviet Union. The New York Times placed El Salvador in a Latin American map that tied the country to Cuba and Nicaragua and had a Honduran border; El Salvador was connected to the United States, in a world that contained the United States and the Soviet Union.

In this case study, Raymond Bonner of The New York Times displayed a dual allegiance--he wrote from both his own individual locus of consciousness and from the public locus of consciousness of The New York Times. He did so by describing the physical horrors and social and political chaos which were the facts of his own experience as well as the procedural viewpoint of his employer and the Salvadoran and the U.S. governments. In the latter case, however, his reporting revealed the failures of normative bureaucratic processes. With the subsequent removal of Bonner from El Salvador, NYT reporting from that country has reported those bureaucratic processes as successes, adhering completely to the procedures of objective journalism in reports of administrative events [46].

Joan Didion, on the other hand, wrote solely from her own individual locus of consciousness about a society which wouldn't resolve into a sensible pattern. This report is strengthened by her own history as a new journalist--Didion's reputation was largely built on her ability to clarify the myriad ambiguities of the 1960s [47]. The keynote of her writing about

El Salvador is terror and the desperation that results from dissolution of tenable social forms.

## Conclusion

The many accusations flung back and forth between objective and new journalists sidetrack and obstruct what should be a reflective and maturing development of narrative form. It cannot be said that creators of narrative within one journalistic genre are telling lies while those within the other are telling the truth. Both are reporting the facts as understood--and needed--by their respective loci of consciousness.

But the public locus is ultimately comprised of distinct human beings--any individual writer may choose from which locus of consciousness to report. The fact-determining methods of public and individual loci of consciousness, and their narrative expressions in objective and new journalism, yield quite different depictions of reality, even when reporting about the same events. Thus the nature of the reporting locus of consciousness has ethical and political dimensions that have rarely been examined and are only vaguely understood.

Further studies that examine loci of consciousness and their use of fact in specific situations as a boundary-defining technique manifested in the narrative forms of objective and new journalism are needed to deepen our understanding of individual texts, forms of journalistic narrative, and the ethical dimensions of those forms.

The conceptual framework offered herein has in the case of the texts examined proven itself capable of serving as a useful tool to that end. With it, it was possible to clearly describe and differentiate the realities depicted and communicated by both objective and new journalism

using fact as a boundary-defining technique.

NOTES

1. This relationship is commonly described in histories of English-language literature, as well as in discussions of Locke. See John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (New York: Wm. Collins Sons, 1964); Kenneth MacLean, John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936); Addison Webster Moore, "Existence, Meaning, and Reality in Locke's Essay and in Present Epistemology," in The Decennial Publication of the University of Chicago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1903); Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907); Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1960); Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London: Ghatto and Windus Ltd., 1964).

2. Locke, op. cit.

3. The term is used here as defined by Jacques Ellul in his work The Technological Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1964).

4. Lennard J. Davis, Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

5. Davis, op. cit.; Michael Schudson, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1978).

6. See Mark Fishman, Manufacturing the News (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Charles C. Flippen, Ed., Liberating the Media (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1974); and Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as

Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," American Journal of Sociology, 77:660-679.

7. See David L. Eason, "Metajournalism: The Problem of Reporting in the Nonfiction Novel," Dissertations Abstracts International, 38:2387-A (1977) (University Microfilms No. 77-24459); John Hellmann, Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as New Fiction (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Michael L. Johnson, The New Journalism (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1971); Arthur Jesse Kaul, "The Social Ecology of the Newspaper and the Professional Journalist," Dissertation Abstracts International, 43:2142-A (1982) (University Microfilms No. 82-29286); John Merrill, Existential Journalism (New York: Hastings House, 1977).

8. The following writers stand out in the growing literature on objective journalism: James W. Carey, "The Communications Revolution and the Professional Communicator," Sociological Review, 13:23-28 (1969); Fishman, op. cit.; Flippen, op. cit.; Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Bernard Roshco, Newsmaking (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Schudson, op. cit.; Tuchman, 1972, op. cit.; and Gaye Tuchman, Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

9. Commentators who write from this perspective include: Eason, op. cit.; John Hollowell, Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Seymour Krim, "The Newspaper as Literature/Literature as Leadership," in Ronald Weber (ed.), The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy (New York: Hastings House, 1974), pp. 169-187; Norman Mailer

in Michael Schumacher, "Modern Evenings: An Interview with Norman Mailer," Writer's Digest, (October, 1983), pp. 30-34; and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, Mythopoetic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

10. Discussed in Hollowell, op. cit.; Norman Podhoretz, "The Article as Art," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 125-136; Theodore Solotaroff, "Introduction to Writers and Issues," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 161-166; and Tom Wolfe, The New Journalists (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973).

11. Described by Michael J. Arlen, "Notes on the New Journalism," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 224-254; Ron Dorfman, "Democracy in the Newsroom: Notes on the Movement Towards Non-seigneurial Journalim," in Flippen, op. cit., pp. 192-202; Schudson, op. cit.; and Gaye Tuchman, "Professionalism as an Agent of Legitimation," Journal of Communication, 28:106-113.

12. See Schudson, op. cit.; Wolfe, op. cit.; and Gay Talese, "The Book as a Medium for Journalism," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 42-49.

13. Herbert Gold, "On Epidemic First Personism," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 283-287.

14. Kaul, op. cit.

15. Examples include Hans Magnus Enzensberger, The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Krim, op. cit.; Jack Newfield, "The 'Truth' about Objectivity and the New Journalism," in Flippen, op. cit., pp. 59-65; Richard Poirier, "Literature, Technology, People," Daedalus, 111(4):61-74 (Fall 1982); Ithiel de Sola Pool, "The Culture of Electronic Print, Daedalus, 111(4):117-132 (Fall 1982); Podhoretz, op. cit.; novelist

Philip Roth as cited in Hollowell, op. cit., p. 5; and Zavarzadeh, op. cit.

16. Examples here include Norman Mailer as discussed in Eason, op. cit., p. 182; and Talese, op. cit.

17. This interpretation of new journalism is espoused by Harold Hayes, "Editor's Notes on the New Journalism," in Weber, op. cit., pp. 260-262; Jack Newfield, "Is There a New Journalism?" in Weber, op. cit., pp. 299-304; and Weber, op. cit.; and supported by the emphasis on the personalism of new journalism and the individualism of its practitioners described by Hellmann, op. cit., Johnson, op. cit., and Kaul, op. cit.

18. Particularly useful in these formations were Fishman, op. cit.; Flippen, op. cit.; Harvey L. Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior," American Sociological Review, 39(1): 101-112 (1974); and Gaye Tuchman, Making News, op. cit.

19. Tuchman, Making News, op. cit., p. 3.

20. Schudson, op. cit., p. 5.

21. Flippen, op. cit., p. 25.

22. Fishman, op. cit.; Flippen, op. cit.; and Tuchman, Making News, op. cit.

23. Tuchman, Making News, op. cit.; Tuchman, "Professionalism," op. cit.

24. Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual," op. cit., p. 660.

25. Fishman, op. cit.; Flippen, op. cit.; Gans, op. cit.; Roshco, op. cit.; Leon V. Sigal, Reporters and Officials (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973); Tuchman, Making News, op. cit.

26. Tuchman, Making News, op. cit.

27. Fishman, op. cit.; Flippen, op. cit.

28. Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966), p. 7.

29. Hellman, op. cit.; Jay Jensen, "The New Journalism in Historical Perspective," in Flippen, op. cit., pp. 18-28; Newfield, "The "Truth" about Objectivity," op. cit.; Watt, op. cit.; Wolfe, op. cit.

30. Eason, op. cit.; Kaul, op. cit.; Zavarzadeh, op. cit.

31. Joan Didion, The White Album (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 11.

32. Joan Didion, Slouching towards Bethlehem (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Didion, The White Album, op. cit.; Joan Didion, Salvador (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); John Gregory Dunne as cited in Jay Schaefer, "An Interview with John Gregory Dunne," San Francisco Review of Books, 7(2):7-8; James E. Murphy, "The New Journalism: A Critical Perspective," Journalism Monographs, 34 (1974); Newfield, "The 'Truth,'" op. cit.; Gaye Talese, Fame and Obscurity (New York: World Publishing Company, 1970); Zavarzadeh, op. cit.

33. Hellmann, op. cit., p. 140.

34. Didion, Salvador, op. cit.

35. John M. Shipman, "New York Times' Coverage of the War in El Salvador," Journalism Quarterly, 60(4):719-721 (Winter 1983).

36. A. A. Berle, Jr., "Loose Thinking on Latin America," Columbia Journalism Review, 1(2):11-13 (1962); Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, "The News from Latin America," Columbia Journalism Review, 1(3):49-60 (1962); George Chaplin, "Latin American News in the U.S. Press," Nieman Reports, 9(1):3-5 (1955); Carolyn Garrett Cline, "Our Neglected

Neighbors: How the U.S. Elite Media Covered Latin America in 1977," Dissertation Abstracts International, 42:2758-A (University Microfilms No. 82-02968); Georgie Ann Geyer, "Latin America: The Making of an 'Uncontinent," Columbia Journalism Review, 8(4):49-53 (1969); John Maxwell Hamilton, "Ho-hum, Latin America," Columbia Journalism Review, 16(1):9-10 (1977); Al Hester, "The News from Latin America via a World News Agency," Gazette, 20:82-98 (1974); James W. Markham, "Foreign News in the U.S. and South American Press," Public Opinion Quarterly, 25:249-262 (1961); Jonathan Evan Maslow and Ana Arana, "Operation El Salvador," Columbia Journalism Review, 20(4):52-58 (1981); Michael Massing, "About-face on El Salvador," Columbia Journalism Review, 22(4):42-49 (1983); John Spencer Nichols, "Riding High," Quill, 69(5):25-26 (1981); Demetrio Olaciregui, "The Silencers," Columbia Journalism Review, 20(4):56-57 (1981); Richard O'Mara, "Latin America: The Hole in the News," Nation, 221:16-18 (1975); Shipman, op. cit.; Perry Deane Young, "From Saigon to Salvador: Revisionism Revisited," Quill, 71(5):7-13 (1983).

37. Mustapha Masmoudi, "The New World Information Order," in Jim Richstad and Michael H. Anderson (eds.), Crisis in International News: Policies and Prospects (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 77-96.

38. International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (the MacBride Commission), "Interim Report in Communication Problems in Modern Society," in Richstad and Anderson, op. cit., pp. 35-55.

39. Geyer, op. cit., p. 50.

40. Personal communication with Raymond Bonner, January 27, 1984.

41. Didion, Slouching towards Bethlehem, op. cit.; Didion, The

White Album, op. cit.

42. Didion, Salvador, op. cit., p. 55.

43. Ibid., p. 61.

44. Ibid., p. 63.

45. Ibid., p. 38.

46. Massing, op. cit.

47. See, for example, Martha Duffy, "Review of The White Album," New York Review of Books, 26(13):32-33 (1979); Ann Hulbert, "Review of The White Album, New Republic, 180:35 (1979); "Review of The White Album, New Yorker, 55:10 (June 18, 1979); etc.

# THE 'FACTS' OF EL SALVADOR ACCORDING TO OBJECTIVE AND NEW JOURNALISM

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## ABSTRACT

The debate between objective and new journalism centers upon the question of which approach depicts reality factually. Both genres, however, are part of one fact/fiction matrix in which all narrative forms since Locke have been based upon factuality. The two genres have come to differ in the ways fact is used as a boundary-defining technique by the reporting locus of consciousness. These differences can be described in terms of fact-collecting procedures, sources of information, space, time, and context. Individual loci of consciousness (coterminous with individual human organisms) rely upon the sensory data of their own experience in reporting facts that cohere into a unified picture of reality; these facts receive narrative expression in new journalism. Public loci of consciousness (which rest in organizations) rely upon the procedural data provided by participants in bureaucratic processes for facts about the passage of events through administrative categories; these facts are expressed in the narrative form of objective journalism. A comparison of fact in two narratives about El Salvador during June of 1982 shows that Joan Didion's new journalism report from an individual locus of consciousness is shaped by the needs of a biological organism, while the objective journalism report of The New York Times reveals an accommodation of individual reporter Raymond Bonner with the public locus of consciousness of the national newspaper of record and its political, economic, and military interests.